DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 444 124 CS 014 068

AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
TITLE Evaluation of Round Robin Approaches in Teaching Reading.
PUB DATE 2000-08-29
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Techniques; *Evaluation Criteria; Instructional Effectiveness; Phonics; Primary Education; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Strategies
IDENTIFIERS Big Books; Individualized Reading Program; *Round Robin Reading

ABSTRACT

One approach in the teaching of reading that is criticized a lot is the round robin procedure in which the teacher, generally in a heterogeneously grouped classroom, forms three reading subgroups for instruction purposes. Each of the groups is as homogenous as possible. The teacher teaches one subgroup, while the other two are profitably engaged in related learning activities. Each subgroup takes its turn in sequence. A basal textbook is used, and each subgroup reads a short section silently and is then quizzed about content. Round robin reading had its day of emphasis in reading literature, but today it is considered outdated. It is still popular in some schools because it provides the teacher an opportunity to notice the quality of oral reading students and it is an orderly way of teaching small groups. However, it becomes too routine if used excessively as a teaching activity, and it separates students into specific groups rather than keeping them together in reading achievement. Other effective approaches for reading are the "Big Book" approach, the individualized approach, and a contract system which emphasizes a psychological approach in reading instruction. There needs to be a balance between reading for meaning and word recognition techniques, such as phonics. Phonics should be taught as needed to individual or small groups of students. (NKA)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 444 124

Evaluation of Round Robin Approaches in Teaching Reading.

by Marlow Ediger

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

M. Ediger

CS 014 068

EVALUATION OF ROUND ROBIN APPROACHES IN TEACHING READING

Reading programs advocated by specialists come and go. They may also be modified or resurrected in future times. The author has lived through approaches in reading instruction including the following which as a whole have disappeared:

1. The Initial Teaching Alphabet (ITA).
2. Rebus which used small illustrations to replace complex abstract words in context for young readers.
3. The controlled vocabulary for beginning reading.
4. Linguistic procedures stressing words following a pattern (Ediger, 2000, Chapter Ten).

Round Robin Reading

One approach that is criticized much in the teaching of reading presently is the round robin procedure. Here, the teacher, generally in a heterogeneously grouped classroom, forms three reading subgroups for instruction purposes. Each of the three are as homogeneous as possible. The teacher then teaches one subgroup while the other two are profitably engaged in related learning activities. Each subgroup in sequence takes their turn in the teaching of reading.

A basal textbook is used. The reading teacher may follow a plan such as the following in teaching the class as a whole before learners are taught in a subgroup:

1. writing the new words to be encountered from the basal in neat, manuscript letters on the chalkboard. Students with teacher guidance view each word carefully so it will be recognized while reading. Phonics is stressed as needed to help students identify each unknown word.
2. assisting students to attach meaning to each word within a sentence. Contextual meaning is important to guide students to identify words in a vocabulary setting.
3. discussing background information and the pictures in the basal with students that relate directly to the subject matter to be read.
4. having students read the content silently at their desks.
5. having the first subgroup come to the front to be seated in a set of chairs for teaching and learning.

The first subgroup then is directed to read a short section silently. Generally, the teacher states the purpose for reading each section silently, such as "Let's read to find out what Bill did to earn money to buy a new baseball glove." After each child has completed the silent reading selection, the teacher asks the subgroup what Bill did to earn the money. The teacher than has opportunities to check comprehension of students from silent reading. The balance of the silent reading also

requires students to read for a purpose as stated by the teacher. Next, students take turns in orally reading the same selections. Here, the reading teacher notices which words cause problems in reading aloud by individual students. Students then receive help in phonics/syllabication to unlock words that were not initially identified.

The second and third subgroups take their turns sequentially to be taught in the small group by the reading teacher using a similar procedure in reading instruction as indicated for subgroup one.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Round Robin Reading

Round robin reading had its day in being emphasized in the reading literature, while presently it is criticized as being outdated. It is still widely used in actual teaching and learning situations in the public schools. The author noticed its frequent use when supervising student teachers in the public schools for thirty yeas. Why is round robin reading still popular among certified teachers in teaching reading to young learners?

1. it provides the teacher an opportunity to notice the quality of oral reading of students. Errors noticed in word identification provide objectives for the next lesson(s) in reading instruction. Thus, selected phonics or syllabication skills need more emphasis in teaching reading.
2. comprehension of ideas may be noticed by the teacher, through questions raised, from silent as well as oral reading activities.
3. the small group of students makes it possible for the teacher to work with individuals therein who need assistance in reading instruction.
4. it is an orderly way of teaching small groups in that students may quietly and efficiently take their places next to the classroom teacher and then return to their desks after instruction.
5. it stresses a balance between heterogeneous and homogeneous grouping of students. Too frequently, homogeneous grouping is perceived as being negative. And yet in society, individuals mix with others in homogeneous as well as heterogeneous groupings.

All plans of teaching reading have an opposite and equal reaction. Thus, there are disadvantages in using round robin reading procedures:

1. it becomes too routine if used excessively as a teaching activity.
2. it may embarrass a slow reader in reading orally to others.
3. it holds fast readers back when reading silently and waiting for others to finish their reading before discussing ideas encountered.
4. it separates students into specific groups rather than keeping them together in reading achievement. Strong advocates of heterogeneous grouping believe in cooperative learning with the talented/gifted helping the others in reading so that the group is held intact.

5. slow readers are labeled when being together in a specific group for the teaching of reading (See Ediger, 2000, 20-29).

The Big Book Approach

No matter which procedure of teaching reading is stressed, there are advantages and disadvantages for each. This can be illustrated with newer approaches that are in vogue. First, the Big Book approach is receiving rather wide acclaim. The Big Book is large enough for all young readers to see clearly in a group. The teacher discusses the illustrations with learners and then reads aloud the related content, pointing to the words being read. Students follow along as the teacher reads aloud. Next, students together with the teacher do the oral reading together. In sequence, students together read the contents orally. In this way, students

1. receive background information, prior to hearing the teacher read the content orally.
2. see the words being read as the teacher reads aloud while pointing to the words and phrases.
3. practice reading aloud with the teacher and then separately in a group setting.
4. have chances to develop a basic sight vocabulary from seeing the words as they are being read orally, as well as attach meaning to what is being read.
5. experience repetitive reading opportunities to rehearse and reinforce word identification procedures.

Disadvantages of the Big Book approach in reading are the following:

1. evaluating reading achievement on an individual basis is difficult with emphasis being placed upon the entire group progressing together.
2. there are weaknesses in stressing sound/symbol relationships when a holistic approach in reading instruction is being emphasized. Thus, there are times when students, individually, need help in identifying unknown words.
3. all students are to follow along and read aloud together in unison; no provision is made for individual differences in rate of comprehension (See Gardner, 1993, for information on interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence).
4. repetitive reading may become boring and lack challenge for some.
5. each student needs to be challenged and not be held back by a

group (See Rosenblatt, 1978, for a discussion on there is no such a thing as a generic reader).

Individualized Reading

Another procedure used in teaching reading today which also has opposite and equal reactions is individualized reading. Individualized reading became popular in the early 1960s and still has backing by many reading specialists. With prior motivational and readiness experiences, students are to select a library book to read from among alternatives. The student does the choosing not the teacher. The teacher may select a library books for the student if the latter can not settle down with a book to read. After completion of the reading of a library book, the student has a conference with the teacher on a one to one basis. Here, the teacher may raise questions of the book content to assess comprehension of the reader. He/she may also have the student read aloud a selection from the library book to notice problems in word recognition, among other skills. The teacher records results from the dated conference to make comparisons with the next conference held with the same student. Other students take their respective turns in having conferences with the teacher. Advantages of the individualized approach in reading are the following:

1. it takes into consideration individual interests and purposes.
2. it allows the student to pace his/her own rate of reading content without making comparisons with other students in the classroom.
3. it permits the student's time in a conference to be the teacher's time on a one to one basis, a sound psychological approach.
4. it allows for a student centered sequence with the learner choosing ordered library books to read.
5. it stresses a psychological sequence, not a logical sequence in learning. A psychological sequence allows the student to make choices in learning, whereas a logical sequence emphasizes the teacher ordering the reading curriculum for students (Tiedt, 1983).

Disadvantages for individualized reading include

1. most schools have meager library holdings which impair chances for having a good individualized reading program. Teachers may not have adequate knowledge of <u>many</u> library books when having conferences.
2. selected students are not mature enough to make sequential choices of library books to read.
3. the learning style of some students would not harmonize with an individualized program of reading .
4. many teachers are rushed in conferences following through on an individualized reading program, especially with large numbers of students in a classroom.

5. behavioral problems may arise when selected students are to be independent in choosing and reading a library book while the teacher is having a conference with a student (See Dunn and Dunn, 1978).

A Contract System

A contract system also emphasizes a psychological approach in reading instruction. The contract system, too, stresses an opposite and equal reaction approach in teaching and learning. Thus, the student with teacher guidance plans what to read which is put into a contract. The due date in fulfilling the contract is listed. Both student and teacher sign their names to the agreed upon contract. Advantages of the contract system are the following:

1. it is a motivator for the learner to fulfill the contents of the contract.
2. it provides for student interests in having the learner choose which library books to read in contract form.
3. it provides for teacher input into making the contract selections.
4. it encourages the development of a goal centered reading curriculum.
5. it emphasizes achieving a longer range program of reading instruction by looking ahead as to what should be accomplished in reading library books.

Disadvantages in evidence for the contract system include the following:

1. it makes it difficult for the teacher to find time to plan a contract with each student.
2. it becomes a problem for the teacher to be knowledgeable about which library books should go into a contract for the student to read.
3. it is not feasible to develop contracts when most schools lack an adequate number of diverse library books.
4. it is difficult for many students to have perceptions in developing a plan for a longer range goal in selecting library books to read.
5. it makes for problems in assessing how to ascertain fulfillment of the contract of <u>many</u> students in the classroom (Ediger, 2000, 16-19).

Making Comparisons Among Plans of Reading Instruction

Round robin procedures of reading instruction incorporate a definite approach in stressing phonics. Based on the use of basal readers, round robin reading has specific learning opportunities to stress in assisting students to use phonics to identify unknown words.

The manual section has learning opportunities in developing word analysis skills for students. How much phonics is stressed? This depends upon several factors:

1. how much is emphasized within the manual of a basal reading series.
2. how much teachers wish to stress. This can come on a continuum from systemic phonics to how much each student needs to become independent in word recognition. When research statements are made on phonics versus holistic approaches in reading instruction, researchers rarely mention how much phonics is taught in the experimental group receiving phonics instruction. Or, if phonics is completely omitted from holistic approaches in reading instruction.
3. how much emphasis should be placed upon phonics, according to statewide legislation and standards.
4. how much stress the local school places upon phonics instruction.
5. how much phonics instruction is in vogue among teachers in a school whereby selected personalities are more vocal about their preferences, as compared to others, in the teaching of reading.

The Big Book, individualized reading, and the contract system are holistic in their philosophy of reading instruction. Here, the inherent philosophy may not mention phonics instruction as important in the teaching of reading. However, selected teachers may bring in phonics as they deem necessary. Of the three holistic procedures of reading instruction, the following are apparent:

1. individualized reading permits the monitoring of oral reading problems and comprehension difficulties exhibited by learners on an individual basis. This provides feedback to the reading teacher as to what should and needs to be emphasized in helping to improve student performance.
2. The Big Book approach shys away from working with individuals in word recognition and comprehension skills. Emphasis is placed upon group work and group achievement.
3. the contract system as does individualized reading tend to omit social development as objectives of instruction. Students here work individually on learning opportunities in the reading curriculum.
4. The Big Book approach stresses more repetitive reading as does individualized reading and the contract system. Repetition, however, should depend upon the needs of individual students.
5. most schools would not have an adequate number of library books to emphasize individualized reading nor the contract system.

What Is The Answer?

There certainly needs to be balance between reading for meaning (holism in reading instruction) and word recognition techniques, such as phonics in the teaching of reading. But, what is meant by balance?

Phonics should be taught as needed to individual or small groups of students. Systematic phonics instruction in reading for all is certainly wasting time for those already proficient in word recognition. Whole language instruction in reading needs to incorporate phonics instruction for those who can benefit from these learnings to unlock unknown words. Rigid ideas on the teaching of reading need to be abandoned in favor of flexibility in choosing a philosophy of instruction which is beneficial for each student. No learner should fall through the cracks in becoming a good reader due to ideologies held by any reading teacher.

Students are individuals and each has selected needs in reading instruction. These needs should become objectives for the teacher in the selection of learning opportunities so that students may achieve vital ends of reading instruction. Word recognition skills are tools only, to be used to guide each student to comprehend and understand content read. Beyond comprehending and understanding content read, students may learn to think critically and creatively, as well as engage in problem solving pertaining to ideas acquired.

Selected References

Dunn, Rita S., and Kenneth Dunn (1978), "Teaching Styles: Learning Styles," Educational Leadership, 36 (4), 238-244.

Ediger, Marlow (2000), Teaching Reading Successfully. New Delhi, India: Discovery Publishing House, Chapter Ten.

Ediger, Marlow (2000), "The School Principal as Leader in Reading Instruction," Reading Improvement, 37 (1), 20-29.

Ediger, Marlow (2000), "Reading and Pupils," Oklahoma Reader, 35 (3), 16-19.

Gardner, Howard (1993), Multiple Intelligences: Theory Into Practice. New York: Basic Books.

Rosenblatt, Louise (1978), The Reader, the Text, The Poem, Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press.

Tiedt, Iris M., (1983), The Language Arts Handbook. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 267-268.